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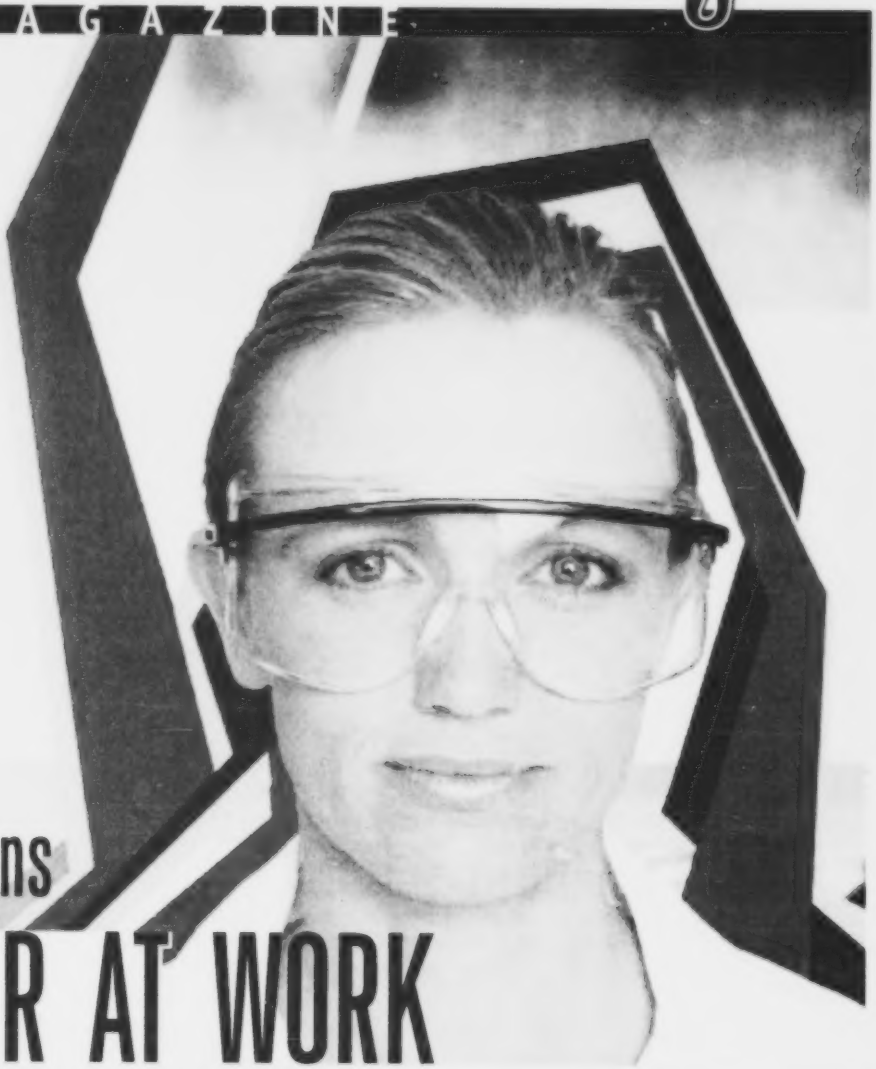
MAGAZINE



Making Albertans SAFER AT WORK

WORK SAFE ALBERTA INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED

Workplace Health & Safety Web site: www.whs.gov.ab.ca

Teamwork Produces an Amazing Conference

by Ed Corson

The first annual Alberta Health & Safety Conference hosted by the Health & Safety Conference Society of Alberta received a lot of praise and positive comments. The conference, held in Edmonton November 19 to 21, 2002, attracted in excess of 500 attendees, including 300 full conference delegates. There were 65 exhibitors at the trade fair, and more are already lined up for next year's event. World-class speakers from across North America who saw the opportunity to reach a vast array of interested delegates made the trek to Edmonton to get their messages across.

"One of the biggest hurdles was to set aside the egos and agree that teamwork was the only way to make this happen."

How did this amazing conference come about? And why?

Over the past decade, the level of activity around health and safety has reached an all-time high. Many industry and safety associations have been arranging and hosting successful conferences on the issues they face. Since the opportunities to bring in speakers are limited by the size of the event, a few individuals representing a few associations began discussing the possibility of a multi-partner safety conference. Many of those involved had a common thought: "It's a great idea, but how do you go about getting it done?"

The answer can be summed up in one word: Teamwork.

None of this would have happened if the membership of the Health & Safety Conference Society of Alberta hadn't been committed to teamwork two years in advance and if they hadn't set in place a plan to make the idea become a reality.

Safety, industry and professional associations, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, and the Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta agreed that the only way to pull off this conference was to go ahead and do it. Sounds simple. But the first step in achieving the goal really was to establish a goal. While our hearts and souls wanted the perfect conference with complete involvement of everyone in the province, perfect commitment from all interested groups, the best speakers in the world and a trade show of epic proportions, we realized we had better start off with ensuring that the basics would be achieved.

The first – and really only – objective was to host a conference for the entire membership in 2002. Speakers, facilities, communication and publicity fell into place quickly, as did the trade fair. Before the organizing committee knew it, the conference went from being an idea to being a plan to being an event to being complete – and a roaring success.

One of the biggest hurdles was to set aside the egos of each of the organizations involved and to agree that teamwork was the only way to make this happen. Each organization that joined the movement was an equal in terms of opportunities to participate. The founding members of the society recognized that the group would only be as strong as our membership, and we worked hard to ensure that everyone had a chance to get involved. It was up to each individual or association to seize that opportunity.

We learned many things:

- It's amazing what a few people can accomplish when they set their minds to it.
- A worthwhile goal, along with committed individuals and organizations, is a powerful combination.
- Sometimes you just have to start somewhere to go somewhere.
- The conference may not have been perfect, but it was much better than not having one at all.
- There hasn't been a single doubt about whether we would hold a second conference. We have many creative and new ideas to make the 2003 conference bigger and better. (See details on page 23 of this issue.)

What started with an idea has become a significant event in Alberta and something that will continue to grow and set a world-wide standard.

I'd like to thank all the individuals and associations who got involved in the 2002 conference. And for those who have not yet participated, there's plenty of time to get involved in the 2003 event in Calgary.

Ed Corson, who has over two decades of experience in the health and safety field, is the president of the Health & Safety Conference Society of Alberta. He currently operates his own loss control consulting company, Corson & Associates Inc.

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Letters to the editor We welcome response to articles or information published in this magazine, as well as suggestions for future articles. We will print letters to the editor as space permits. The editor reserves the right to edit letters.

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Visit the Workplace Health & Safety Web site at **www.whs.gov.ab.ca** or contact the Workplace Health & Safety Call Centre at 1-866-415-8690.

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Members of the team, L to R: Bill Krysak, security supervisor; Edith Hepburn, coordinator, Occupational Health and Safety; Sebastian Hanlon, project Web developer, Information Technology; Ross Caffyn, occupational health and safety officer.
Image courtesy of University of Lethbridge

Innovative

WORKING ALONE CHECK-IN SYSTEM

at the University of Lethbridge

In February 2003, the University of Lethbridge introduced an innovative method of ensuring the safety of employees who are working alone on campus. Employees are asked to sign in and out on a specially designed Web site. Although the system has only recently been launched, all reports are that the procedures are seamless and easy.

The intent of the new system is to provide a simple way for employees to comply with the working alone legislation. At the same time, the system creates an awareness level for campus security staff. In case of emergency, the security office can easily find out how many employees are in a particular area or building. As well, the ability to log in and out by computer frees up the emergency phone number.

This new system, which can be accessed only by staff in the security and occupational health and safety offices, was developed collaboratively by the university's departments of Occupational Health and Safety, Information Technology and Security.

For more information, contact Edith Hepburn, coordinator, Occupational Health and Safety, at (403) 329-2099 or **hepbee@uleth.ca**.

NAOSH Week May 4-10, 2003

The official national launch of NAOSH (North American Occupational Safety and Health) Week 2003 will take place in Edmonton on May 6, 2003.

During NAOSH week, employers, workers and the general public organize a range of events such as family safety fairs, recognition programs for employees who have made safe work suggestions, and health and safety presentations to staff and their families.

Start making plans for your organization to participate in NAOSH Week 2004.

For information about how to contact your local NAOSH committee, go to **www.naosh.ca**.

New OHS Regulation in effect

The new Occupational Health and Safety Regulation took effect on March 31, 2003. The OHS Regulation, which deals primarily with administrative and policy issues, consolidates some of the rules that previously appeared in more than 11 regulations, clarifies certain existing rules and adds several new rules. The rules of the existing 11 regulations must still be followed until the OHS Code repeals them in April 2004.

For more information, refer to Safety Bulletin L1021 at **www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/publications/pdf/l1021n.pdf.**

New multimedia workplace safety training CD

On February 19, 2003, the Alberta Forest Products Association officially launched its new multimedia workplace safety training CD.

The CD covers the key elements for developing and implementing a health and safety program, as well as effective techniques for performing health and safety responsibilities. "Alberta forest companies now have access to key health and safety training on site and on

demand anywhere in the province," says AFPA President Gord Lehn.

The AFPA produced the CD in partnership with Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Human Resources Development Canada Office of Learning Technologies, Northern Lakes College, NorQuest College, Christie Communications and Alberta Workforce Essential Skills.

For more information, call (780) 452-2841.

St. John Ambulance plans new building

St. John Ambulance has announced plans to build a $5 million state-of-the-art training facility that will provide services to Edmonton and area. This new building will also be the organization's provincial headquarters. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2003.

For more information, call (780) 452-6153 or go to **www.stjohn.ab.ca.**

Globally harmonized system for hazard classification and labelling

Canadian companies purchase many products from companies in other countries that have different systems for labelling chemical products and relaying hazard information to users. In 1992, work started on the development of a globally harmonized hazard classification system (GHS) for chemicals that would standardize chemical classification and the communication of hazards to users.

GHS has two elements – hazard classification and hazard communication.

- Hazard classification is based on physical, health and environmental hazards.
- Hazard communication includes labelling and material safety data sheets similar to those used in the WHMIS program in Canada.

Current plans in Canada are to begin the implementation of GHS in January 2006 and to achieve full implementation by December 2008.

For more information, go to the Health Canada WHMIS Web site at **www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/whmis/harmonization.htm** *or the International Labour Organization Web site at* **www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/ghs/wghchc.htm#doctop.**

Dow Chemical Company signs alliance with OSHA

On January 13, 2003, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the United States Department of Labor and the Dow Chemical Company formed an alliance to promote worker safety and health. The alliance focuses on Dow's expertise in process safety management and ergonomics. Dow is the first company in the chemical industry and the first Fortune 100 company to forge such an alliance.

An OSHA spokesperson said that this alliance will help establish a solid foundation to build on and further enhance a culture of prevention in the chemical industry.

Work Safe Alberta posters and video clips

Order these Work Safe Alberta posters through the WHS Web site, www.whs.gov.ab.ca:

- Don't Let Your Buddy Down
- Not Everyone Dies in Workplace Incidents
- Safety Is No Accident
- This or That?
- After Hours Attitudes

And, while you're there, take a minute to view these video clips of Albertans talking about safety:

- Hon. Clint Dunford, Minister of Alberta Human Resources and Employment
- Dr. Louis Francescutti, co-director of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
- Renata Gordon, babysitter
- Julia Hamilton, whose son died at a workplace
- Tom Kenny, general manager, Westcan Bulk Transport, and president-elect, Alberta Motor Transport Association
- Gord Lehn, Alberta Forest Products Association
- Don Orbrowsky, owner, Waiward Steel Fabricators Ltd.
- Larry Stone, business development manager, Bird Construction

by Bill Corbett

Taking a Tougher Stand

Safety incidents on the job are rarely prosecuted in Alberta. But for employers who do end up in court, the penalties for breaking the law have just become much stiffer, reflecting the severity with which the Alberta government and the courts view workplace deaths and injuries.

"Some people have the idea we're running around prosecuting everybody," says David Myrol, a Crown prosecutor solely dedicated to prosecuting offences under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. "But it simply isn't the case. We prosecute a very low number of cases."

Indeed, of Alberta's 38,000 claims in 2001 involving at least a day of lost time, only 16 were forwarded to Alberta Justice for review, and only 9 of those resulted in charges. Nearly all charges under the Act are for cases involving fatalities or serious injuries, although some have been laid for unsafe working conditions such as improper asbestos removal. Although individual workers can be – and have been – charged under the Act, the primary focus is on employer responsibility.

Alberta's annual rate of 4.2 prosecutions per million workers is well below the national average of 26 and far from Ontario's 64. Generally, Alberta takes a less aggressive approach to prosecution than Ontario, relying more on prevention, targeted inspections of poorly performing employers and cooperation with such employers to improve their safety programs.

Work Safe Alberta (see article on page 12) is aiming to reduce workplace fatalities by 40 per cent by 2004. There were 118 such fatalities in 2001. Although the current average of six to seven charges a year may not increase under this strategy, prosecution is definitely being given more teeth.

"We are being given more resources and time to prepare better for the cases we do prosecute," says Myrol.

Perhaps more importantly, amendments to the Act in December increased the maximum fines for violations of the Act. These increases, the first since 1988, reflect the seriousness of offences and bring Alberta fines in line with those of other provinces in Canada.

The increased fines also respond to a message from the province's courts that penalties for occupational deaths and injuries weren't severe enough. A few years ago a $50,000 fine was considered high. Then in 2000 a $100,000 fine was levied against an employer after a worker was fatally electrocuted when a party tent pole he was lifting contacted an overhead power line.

Then last year the maximum $150,000 fine was imposed for the first time in a case the judge acknowledged was not at the worst end of the negligence scale. "Here, there was no systematic ignoring of safety concerns," he said of the incident, involving a worker fatally run over by a road paving machine. "Rather, inadequate training and supervision contributed to decisions being made which created a dangerous situation resulting in the most tragic of consequences."

"I think what the courts have been saying is that the existing fines were no longer sufficient to act as a deterrent."

"I think what the courts have been saying is that the existing fines were no longer sufficient to act as a deterrent," says Myrol. "In my view, part of the reason for this increase is because family members are coming into court and telling judges about their loss and how it has affected their lives. This reminds all of us in the courtroom, including the judge, about the reality of unnecessary workplace incidents."

The recent amendments to the Act also allow courts to order alternative penalties such as making convicted employers establish effective safety programs, conduct safety workshops or perform community service. While judges have always had the option of imposing jail sentences, only one such sentence – for obstruction of justice – has ever been ordered in Alberta.

Despite these changes, the number of cases proceeding to court will likely remain few since prosecution is a

last resort under the Act. Prosecutions are considered only if:

- an employer or worker knowingly and seriously contravened the Act or a regulation
- an employer intentionally did not follow compliance commitments
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment believes prosecution is the best way to encourage compliance

An occupational health and safety officer considering prosecution must prepare a court brief, with supporting documentation, which is passed on to senior department officials. "We do a prosecution analysis to determine if a recommendation to prosecute should be forwarded to Alberta Justice," says Eric Reitsma, manager for the northern region, Workplace Health & Safety.

Avoiding the possibility of prosecution, says Crown Prosecutor David Myrol, is almost always simply a matter of due diligence. "The law does not expect a standard of perfection in the workplace; it does not expect you to be clairvoyant," he says. "Some accidents happen in spite of the best due diligence, and there is no automatic punishment simply because of the consequences. What the law does expect you to do is to take all reasonable care under the circumstances, and the more hazardous the activity, the greater the care that must be taken."

When you look at cases that end in a fatality or serious injury, Myrol adds, there are three questions you should ask:

- Could anything else have been done to avoid the incident?
- How much effort would it have taken?
- What would it have cost?

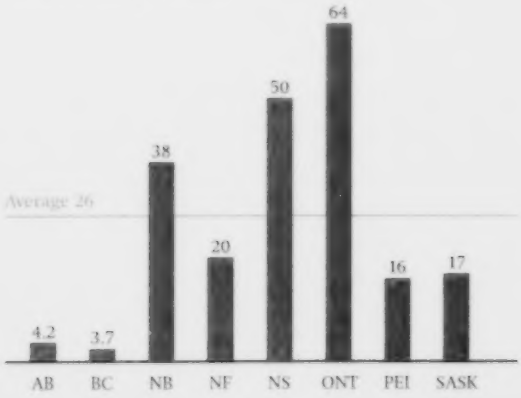
Myrol's final comment: "When you look at just about every case that goes to court, the incident could easily have been avoided. And not at great expense."

Bill Corbett is a Calgary writer.

A Crown Prosecutor's Advice to Employers about Due Diligence

- Know your responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and associated regulations.
- Identify known and possible work site hazards.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive safety program, complete with ongoing training and monitoring. A safety policy is worthless if it's not regularly practiced.
- Keep written records of safety meetings, incidents and any disciplinary actions.
- Beware of overconfidence and complacency – bad things can happen to good companies.
- Remember, workplace safety is an investment, not an expense.

Prosecutions per Million Workers/Year: Canada



Source: Alberta Human Resources and Employment
(Figures not available for Manitoba and Quebec)

Resources

WEB LINKS

http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/prosecutions/index.asp
Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Prosecutions

http://www4.gov.ab.ca/just/crimpros/prosecute.cfm
Crown Prosecutor's roles and responsibilities

http://www.whscc.nb.ca/english/news/OHS_English.pdf
Discussion of OH&S penalties and fines by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of New Brunswick

EQUIPPING YOUTH

for Safety and Success

by Cheryl Mahaffy

Beginning workers may feel the invincibility of youth, but it's a truism that on a typical jobsite they're most at risk. The national non-profit Propane Training Institute, which trains and certifies 25,000 propane handlers a year, heard some of the stories behind the grim statistics on high rates of injury to young workers and decided to put its curriculum-building expertise to work in preparing youth for that crucial first job. The PTI's Service!Plus training, an intense, interactive course launched in British Columbia during 2002, is already graduating certified youth into positions with happy retailers ranging from Future Shop to Bootlegger.

Expect to see the Service!Plus name popping up in Alberta next. Having licensed delivery agents in Lethbridge and Calgary, with Edmonton soon to follow, the institute is training instructors and spreading the word through such avenues as high schools, government agencies and youth groups. A launch in Ontario is also on the horizon, en route to what will eventually be a national pre-employment initiative.

"Our target is to get to kids before they enter the job market, to help them make the attitude leap from 'This is a part-time job' to 'This is the first rung of my career ladder.'" notes Bill Egbert, who is shepherding this venture in his role as PTI general manager. Service!Plus first focused on workplace safety, he adds, but soon expanded to include customer service and career development as stakeholders offered support and advice. Recognizing that this industry-led initiative has potential to put legs under key messages, both the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. and the B.C. Crime Prevention Association provided access to their curricula and expertise. For career development materials, the institute turned to well-known motivational trainer Brian Tracy, a Californian with roots in Canada, who saw the initiative as a vehicle for his lifelong desire to reach youth.

"Beyond a gung-ho attitude, trained young workers carry heightened awareness of both rights and responsibilities."

The resulting two-day course has three sub-units: Service!, Safety!Plus and Career!Plus. "As far as I know, we're the only organization that has put those three pieces together in concise material," Egbert observes. "We believe that just one segment in itself doesn't really feed the whole person." The institute is also somewhat unusual in certifying only those who achieve a score of 75 per cent on written exams, he adds. "Our students have to demonstrate that they've learned what they need to know."

The program's first report card indicates positive results, both anecdotally and by the numbers. Among the initial 120 graduates, 72 per cent of those who wanted work found a job within six weeks, 92 per cent said they feel more qualified to enter the workforce as a result of the program, and a full 96 per cent would recommend the training to others. Comments by Stephanie Green of Abbotsford are typical: "I enjoyed the no-nonsense reality of the course," she wrote in evaluating the program. "Service!Plus taught me 'No excuses and no complaints.' It is something I will use from now on."

Employers confirm that graduates apply their learning at work. Tim Horton's franchisee Wayne Corlett is

at Work

among those who've signed on as employer sponsors, gaining online access to the resumes of certified graduates in return for a pledge to consider those candidates when hiring. Having already hired two graduates whose attitude and helpfulness rate "awesome" in his book, Corlett fully expects to keep that pledge.

Beyond a gung-ho attitude, trained young workers carry heightened awareness of both rights and responsibilities, which in turn enhances safety, Egbert says. "What we want is to have kids take more responsibility for their own safety and ask employers ...uch tougher questions than before. One of the predominant reasons for injury is not pointing out hazards, for fear of being fired. We need to stop that, absolutely." He recounts the tale of two B.C. students who worked their regular shift at McDonald's after a day of Safety!Plus training. "They came back next time and said, 'There's been this little issue in back, with people bumping into an electrical thing that's not very safe. We realized it's our job to tell them, so we did – and they fixed it.' And we said, 'Yes! We're making an impact.'"

PTI is not the first in aiming to make an impact on the statistics surrounding youth at work. In Alberta, the multi-stakeholder Job Safety Skills Society has built a set of three award-winning, provincially approved courses that have been integrated into the curriculum at 500 high schools. Service!Plus, by contrast, trains its own instructors rather than relying on in-school teachers, and expects trainees to commit out-of-school time and pay a fee.

Some fault the new initiative for its user-pay model, saying schools should be responsible for a topic as crucial as safety. But B.C. manager of program development Kevin O'Donnell observes that parents initiate 95 per cent of all inquiries about Service!Plus, and most see the fee as an investment that will return significant dividends. "Most parents I talk to realize that school can't be everything to everyone."

Food Services and Tourism instructor Dolores Volcz of New Westminster Senior Secondary echoes that stance in her report card comments: "I can stand here as an educator and talk, but I'm a teacher. When you have industry talking, students will sit up and listen."

There's no doubt some families can't afford the tuition, which retails at $178 for 16 hours, Egbert admits. "As we grow and start making other contacts, we will work with large

Stark statistics

- Workers 15 to 24 years old represented 17 per cent of those employed in Alberta in 2001, yet accounted for 22 per cent of injured workers.
- Thirteen young Albertans lost their lives on the job in 2000 alone, while more than 7,800 were injured badly enough to miss work beyond the day of the incident.

corporate sponsors as well as governments to see what kind of bursaries can be put in place."

The B.C. program has found one such sponsor in the Ministry of Children and Families. Egbert recalls a young woman enrolled by the ministry who underwent an "amazing" transformation as students rallied around, even raiding their own closets to help her prepare for a job interview. "Finally, somebody told her 'You are worth it and you have every reason to be successful,'" Egbert adds. Like many graduates, she checked in with her instructors after landing an interview. She hadn't gotten the job, but was still flying high after being told, "If you were 18, I would hire you on the spot."

Ideally, programs such as Service!Plus will not replace but rather complement school-based learning, Egbert says. He envisions a day when all accredited safety courses will feed into a national passport program now under consideration, in which each course earns a stamp, and certain stamps are required prior to hiring. "The more the message gets out about awareness and responsibility and respect regarding workers' rights, the more injuries go down. It's bad enough for young workers now, but five years prior, those statistics would have given you a heart attack. Education is helping to raise the bar."

Many Service!Plus graduates are in or just beyond those ominous first six months at work, yet none have been injured. According to 2000 stats for ages 15 to 24, at least five should be among the statistics by now. What's making the difference? "Not only the nature of the training materials but also the passion behind the person doing the training," Egbert suggests. "And the fact that we're able to bring real-life business examples into the classroom. We tell them what nobody else wants to tell them." Students hear all about employers' biggest frustrations, from no-show part-timers to grunge dress. On the safety side he adds, "Unfortunately, there's always a plethora of examples we can use where workers are severely injured, or killed."

For employers facing an expanding skills gap, pre-employment training offers a bridge, says O'Donnell, whose passion for this cause spurred that province's first-out-of-the-gate launch. "We're providing the foundation for rewarding relationships between employers and workers, breaking down the barriers of US vs. THEM that currently exist."

Having clearly found his niche, O'Donnell adds, "As an employer of youth for over 20 years and a father of four, I have always identified the need for this type of program – a program that gives youth fundamental skills they can use from day one. I have always believed that first jobs and employers of youth should play a more important role in developing professional growth in new workers."

Cheryl Mahaffy, an Edmonton writer, is co-author of Agora Borealis: Engaging in Sustainable Architecture.

For more information about the Service! Plus Training Institute, go to **www.serviceplus.ca** *or call toll-free* 1-877-784-4636.

Resources

WEB LINKS

http://www.propanegas.ca/PTI/SV-Main.htm
Service!Plus (including Safety!Plus) training program at PTI

http://workinfonet.bc.ca/bccip/news/ServicePlusLaunch-Article.pdf
Launch of Service!Plus by PTI

www.jobsafetyskills.com
Job Safety Skills Society

http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/workers/
New and Young Workers (Alberta)

http://www.wcb.ab.ca/workingsafely/heads_up_booklets.asp
WCB – Alberta's Heads Up program

http://job-one.ccohs.ca/
CCOHS Job One Web portal

IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY – LABOUR BUILDING

Videos

Dying To Work, 19 min.
W-Five reporter Wei Chen follows one teenager's father as he campaigns for tougher safety rules and tries to make teenagers aware of risks. (VC 0345)

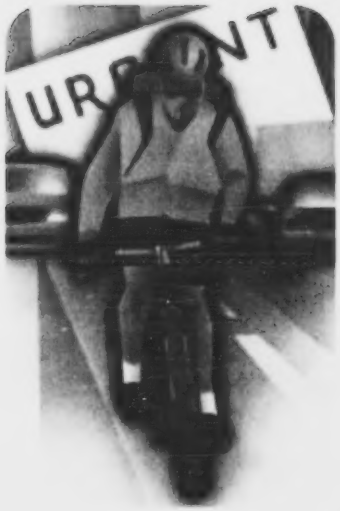
Safety and the Young Worker, 10 min.
Dramatic re-enactments of unsafe work situations and how to correct them, along with interviews with young injured workers. (VC 0181)

Book

Job Safety Skills Society. Job Safety Skills for Young Workers, parts 1-4.
Edmonton: Job Safety Skills Society, 1997 (T55.2 J62)

An excerpt from
X-treme Safety:
Survival tips for rookies
in the workplace

How to Say "NO" at Work



Say "No"? Yeah right. I finally landed this job and I want it to work out. How can I tell my supervisor I won't do something if it's dangerous?

Although it may be awkward to talk about, most employers want to keep their workers safe and appreciate hearing suggestions – it makes their job easier. A safe workplace also means lower insurance premiums for your employer. Pointing out safety concerns and the benefits of a safe workplace can be a great way to gain the respect of your boss. It's also your responsibility as a worker.

Survival tips

You may want to first ask the advice of a trusted co-worker. Then, try to work things out with your direct supervisor. Only speak with their boss if your supervisor doesn't deal with your concerns. Don't go over any heads first.

When you approach your supervisor, make sure your attitude is respectful and positive – it'll show when you're talking. Express your desire for doing the job right, doing it safely.

Here are some examples:

Politely ask your supervisor for a minute of their time. Then say...

"I really want to make sure I do this job right. What should I know about doing it safely?" OR

"I'd like to do this job but I think it could be dangerous. [say why] What do you think?" OR

"I need some training before I do this job. Any suggestions?"

Depending on the situation, a good supervisor may choose to:

- remove any hazards so the task is safe (if that's possible)
- train you on-the-spot
- get another worker to do the task until you've received training
- arrange for you to learn by working with another worker who has experience

The boss insists

If you've tried to talk to your employer and he/she still insists that you do unsafe work, here are some examples of what you can say:

"I've been taught that it's against the law for me to do a task that I believe could be dangerous. I really like my job but I can't do this task...

...until I've got training to do it safely OR

...until the equipment is working properly OR

...until someone holds the base of the ladder OR

...until I've got a respirator so I don't get sick from the fumes OR

...until we're both certain that I can do this job without getting injured."

What if my boss wants me to do something right away and I've got a gut feeling that it's not safe?

Trust your gut. If in doubt, don't do it. Then use any of the survival tips above to deal with your boss. Or you may think of a better way. Remember, do it with respect, stay calm and you'll be okay.

Keep your cool

Every boss will react a little differently. Most employers will be grateful for your input, but others may not be. You may express your concern once and everything may turn out great. Or, you may have to talk with your boss several times before things change. Your boss might get impatient or even angry, but things may still turn out okay – or not. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee for the perfect ending.

You can't be fired!

Wait a minute. If I tell my boss I think a job is unsafe, I'll get fired. Right?

Wrong! That would be illegal. The Occupational Health and Safety Act states: No person shall dismiss or take any other disciplinary action against a worker [acting in compliance with this Act, the regulations, the adopted code...]

Tough choices

If you've tried to work things out with your boss and it's not going great, you may decide to quit your job if your health or safety is at risk. Your life is more important than any job. It's more important than your work ethic or your résumé. And, even though the law says you can't be fired for refusing unsafe work, you could come across an employer who doesn't handle things properly and lets you go. Of course, you'd have every right to take legal action and you may wish to report the employer. To get help, call the Workplace Health & Safety Call Centre at 1-866-415-8690 or visit www.whs.gov.ab.ca.

The X-treme Safety *booklet published by Alberta Human Resources and Employment (2001) is available as a PDF file on the Internet at* **www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/workers/xtreme.asp.**

To order copies of X-treme Safety, *contact:*
Learning Resources Centre
12360-142 Street, Edmonton AB T5L 4X9
Phone (780) 427-5775 Fax (780) 422-9750
www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop
Catalogue item #454992

Most Albertans think the province is a safe place to work – if they even give the subject any thought. And Alberta's record compares well to the rest of the country: it's probably the second best of all the provinces, after Ontario.

But take a hard look at the statistics:

- Over 100 Albertans die from work-related injury or illness each year.
- Alberta averages 3,000 injuries per week.

"That is one person injured or killed every three and a half minutes," says Alberta Human Resources and Employment Minister Clint Dunford. "It does not matter how these statistics compare to the rest of the country. We have far too many shattered families each year. It is time for a major improvement."

"The public will be hearing a lot about workplace safety in the next few months."

If it is heartbreaking to hear about the suffering of grieving family members and friends, then it is infuriating to hear the word "accident." Every investigation of a workplace injury or fatality by Alberta Human Resources and Employment uncovers the fact that several choices were made that led to the tragedy. If any one of those choices had been the right one, the incident would have been avoided. There are no accidents! The time has come to say, "Enough is enough."

Work Safe Alberta, a new joint industry, labour, government, Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta and safety association workplace safety initiative announced on March 5, 2003, is designed to prevent workplace injuries and fatalities. Minister Dunford is challenging industry, safety associations, labour and government to reduce workplace injuries and deaths by 40 per cent by 2004. That works out to 15,000 fewer seriously injured workers each year.

The government's role

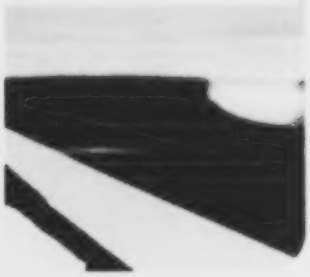
Government is committed to doing its share in regulating work sites. Amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act were passed in December 2002. These amendments introduced six major changes, including an increased maximum fine for a first offence under the Act and the publication of the names of employers with the best and worst safety performance records (see sidebar on page 14 for more details). Each of these amendments is designed to help achieve the goal of reduced workplace injuries and deaths.

Alberta Human Resources and Employment is also:

- promoting workplace safety awareness through a public awareness campaign on television and in print media
- expanding the Workplace Health & Safety Web site and linking it to other safety sites to permit easier browsing of multiple sites
- creating a mentorship program: employers with excellent safety programs will help employers with safety problems to improve
- encouraging employers to join safety associations

Making Albertans Safer at Work

WORK SAFE ALBERTA INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED



by Chris Chodan

- reviewing the current Partnerships in Health and Safety program and encouraging all employers to participate in it (The Partnerships program enables an employer who successfully institutes a workplace health and safety management system to qualify for a rebate of up to 20 per cent on their Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta premiums.)

Above all, government is working closely with employers and workers to improve safety. If regulations are not followed, then they are not worth the paper they are written on. All Albertans have a role to play in eliminating tragedy in our workplaces.

This is the point of the public awareness campaign being conducted by Alberta Human Resources and Employment and its partners in industry, the Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta, unions and safety associations. The legislation is already in place, and so is the commitment of all stakeholder groups to improving Alberta's workplace safety. Now the pieces have to be put together through public involvement: the public must start holding employers and workers accountable for safety.

The employer's role

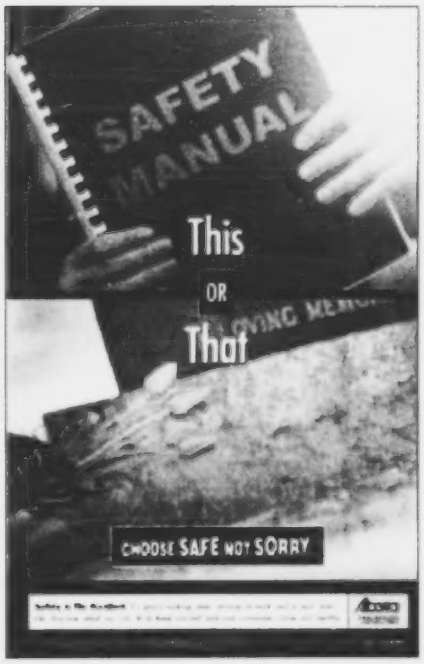
Employers must accept that they are responsible for the safety of their own workers and all workers present on their sites. They CAN prevent injuries and fatalities, or they WILL be held accountable for them.

0.6 per cent of Alberta employers are responsible for 31 per cent of workplace injuries.

Workplace Health & Safety inspectors are paying regular visits to employers who have a safety problem (see page 15). As well, these employers are being encouraged to contact government or safety associations to arrange for mentoring by a company with a good safety record.

Over one million workdays were lost due to injury and illness in Alberta in 2001.

Many smaller employers believe they cannot afford to institute a proper workplace safety program. That is usually only because they do not keep track of how much work time and money they lose from even one injury. The cost of increased



Work Safe Alberta poster

workers' compensation premiums, increased insurance, lost production time, hiring and training new workers, legal costs and fines can be many times the cost of a safety program. So the question is not, "Can they afford such a program?" The question is, "Can they afford to do without one?"

The worker's role

Workers must accept that it is their responsibility to keep their friends and themselves safe, even if it means extra work or sticking their nose in someone else's business. New workers are especially vulnerable:

- One-third of all workplace injuries happen to workers in their first six months at their job.
- One-half of all workplace injuries happen to workers in their first year at their job.

The public will be hearing a lot about workplace safety in the next few months. Through Work Safe Alberta activities. Through the Heads Up campaign aimed primarily at new workers and sponsored jointly by Alberta Human Resources and Employment, the Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta and safety associations. And during North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week. NAOSH is featuring a national launch in Edmonton this year to support Alberta's safety efforts.

The point is worth repeating. Choose safe, not sorry, and find out what help is available to prevent needless suffering and death.

Chris Chodan is a public affairs officer at Alberta Human Resources and Employment Communications.

March 5 launch of Work Safe Alberta: Honourable Clint Dunford, Minister of Human Resources and Employment (left), with Fred Drury, President of Flexxaire Manufacturing Inc., which made the 8-foot-high fan behind them.

CHOOSE SAFE NOT SORRY.

The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act

Bill 37, the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, received Royal Assent on December 4, 2002.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act has been changed in six major ways:

- The maximum fine for a first OHS offence has increased from $150,000 to $500,000.
- Judges can now award penalties other than fines or jail sentences for OHS offences, such as providing safety programs or education programs.
- The process for updating OHS rules may be streamlined by allowing the creation of an Occupational Health and Safety Code to govern the rules for work site safety.
- Administrative fines similar to those used for traffic violations may be adopted for OHS Act violations. The introduction of these fines will depend upon a review of their effectiveness in other jurisdictions.
- The names of employers with the best and worst safety performance in the province will now be published.
- The length of time in which prosecutors may begin a prosecution has been increased from one year to two years.

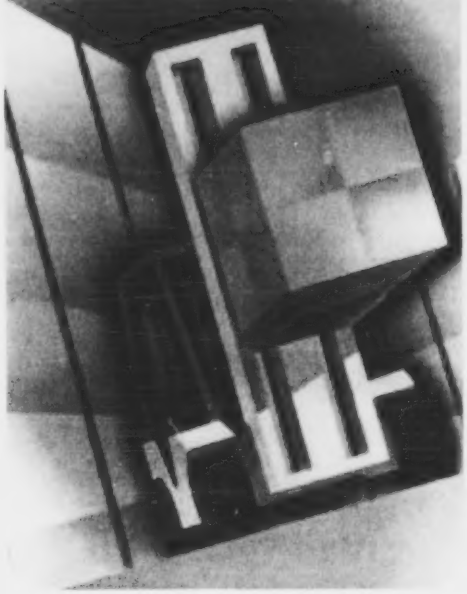
Copies of the Act are available from the Queen's Printer by calling toll free 310-0000 and entering (780) 427-4952 for Edmonton or (403) 297-6251 for Calgary, or by visiting **www.qp.gov.ab.ca.**

For more information about recent amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, go to **http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/publications/pdf/li020.pdf.**

Funding by the Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta

To support Work Safe Alberta, the WCB–Alberta has increased its annual transfer of funds to the Alberta government by $3.3 million, for an annual total of $9.6 million. The additional funding will enhance the provision of safety information and enforcement by government.

The WCB–Alberta is a strong supporter of preventing workplace incidents and an enthusiastic partner in Work Safe Alberta. The initiative will result in 15,000 fewer injured Alberta workers each year and reduce WCB claim costs by $190 million. This equates to a reduction of 42 cents per $100 of insurable earnings.



SAFETY OFFICERS TARGET Problem Employers

by Allan Sheppard and Anita Jenkins

Will Work Safe Alberta have an impact on health and safety inspections?

The short answer to that question is Yes. But you will not notice the changes very much unless you are an owner, manager or employee of the approximately 700 companies whose lost time claim (LTC) rate is significantly higher than the provincial average of 3.2. (These 700 companies have an average LTC rate of 9.1; the lowest LTC rate in this group is 5.)

The Alberta government hired 19 additional occupational health and safety officers in the spring of 2003 to facilitate more frequent visits to the targeted employers. These employers will now receive four or five visits a year, and even more if required.

The health and safety officers also call in a "partnership consultant" to advise employers who find it hard to reduce their LTC rates. One thing the partnership consultants can do is to help employers and managers find and use the many excellent safety resources that are available from government and industry associations. For example, most industry associations offer courses, seminars, workshops and conventions where employers, managers and workers can learn from experts and share their experiences.

"One thing that will not change is the way safety officers conduct inspections."

In future, safety officers might be given the authority to impose on-the-spot administrative fines. These fines would be issued at the discretion of the officer to employers and workers who do not seem willing to comply with safety rules such as providing or using fall protection equipment or having adequate protection for workers in trenches. Workplace Health & Safety will study the impact of administrative fine programs in British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia to see if they are effective before using them in Alberta.

One thing that will not change is the way safety officers conduct inspections. "Inspections of Alberta workplaces will continue to be professional and supportive," says Eric Reitsma, manager for the northern region, Workplace Health & Safety. "The inspections program is not intended to be punitive. We simply want to find solutions that make workers safer and operations more profitable."

That means finding ways to prevent future incidents.

Allan Sheppard is a freelance writer and researcher who lives in Edmonton. Anita Jenkins is the editor of this issue of the OH&S Magazine.

Resources

WEB LINKS

http://www.congressboard.ab.ca/workplace_2002/proceedings/min_clintdunford.htm
Speech by Minister Clint Dunford at the Alberta Congress Board Conference 2002

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/EHS/prod/training/checklist/gencheck.pdf
Stanford University General Workplace Inspection Checklist

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/effectiv.html
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety – information about inspections

IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY – LABOUR BUILDING

Videos

Inspecting for Hazardous Conditions, 21 min.
Familiarizes first-line managers with common hazardous conditions in industrial settings. (VC 0260)

Performing a Job Hazard Analysis, 19 min.
Basic principles and techniques for performing accurate and useful job hazard analysis in a variety of industrial settings. (VC 0259)

Planned Workplace Inspections, 10 min.
The basics of planning and implementing an effective inspection program. (VC 0245)

Wood Buffalo INDUSTRIES

by Norma Ramage

Let's take an imaginary construction worker in Fort McMurray. Call him Joe and make him an ironworker. Joe works for several contractors to the area's three major oil sands plants: Suncor Energy Inc., Syncrude Canada Ltd. and Albian Sands Energy Inc.

When Joe works at Suncor, he is trained to meet that company's fall arrest safety standards. The following month when his job takes him to Syncrude, he undergoes a second fall arrest training program. And when he works at Albian Sands, he takes yet another fall arrest program.

The problem is that the training program for each plant is virtually identical, says Tom Smith, who oversees loss management and safety for Fort McMurray-based L. Robert Ent. People are getting the same training over and over. This kind of redundancy costs contractors and owners money. "Individual training programs take between four and eight hours, hours when the employee isn't working on the job," explains Smith, who has an annual training budget of $60,000 to $70,000.

"Safety is the one issue that breaks down all barriers."

At least some of these additional costs are passed on to the companies. Since as many as 20,000 contract employees can be working at the three plants at any given time, the price tab is high for contractors and companies alike.

It's also difficult to track which workers have received which training, especially for smaller companies with limited resources. This can result in unnecessary retraining and more cost.

But money isn't the only problem, says Brad Koskowich, health and safety team leader at Albian Sands. Koskowich believes that making workers undergo multiple training programs can also cause safety problems. "It's like a race. You can probably jump one hurdle safely, but if you have to jump 10 or 15, by the law of averages, you might step on one of those hurdles and fall. We decided that we needed to set the safety bar equally across all three companies, and raise that bar at the same time."

That's why Suncor, Syncrude and Albian agreed last fall to establish the Oil Sands Safety Association. The vision of the Association was to work toward "an incident-free workforce" through the introduction of agreed-upon safety training standards. The three companies invited representatives from government, contractors and labour to join the Association, and project teams were quickly formed to create the standards.

The Association completed its initial common standard – for fall protection – at the end of April. Standards for other safety programs will follow throughout the year.

When the standards have been established, contractors, unions and private companies who provide safety training can seek accreditation and certification to those standards. Says Smith, "Contractors will know that a person we have trained to these standards can work on all three sites."

Peter Dunfield, senior loss management advisor at Syncrude and an owner representative on the Association's three-member steering committee, says everyone involved has put in hundreds of volunteer hours to move the project ahead quickly. "The enthusiasm for this project is blowing me away. Everybody is pumped at the opportunity."

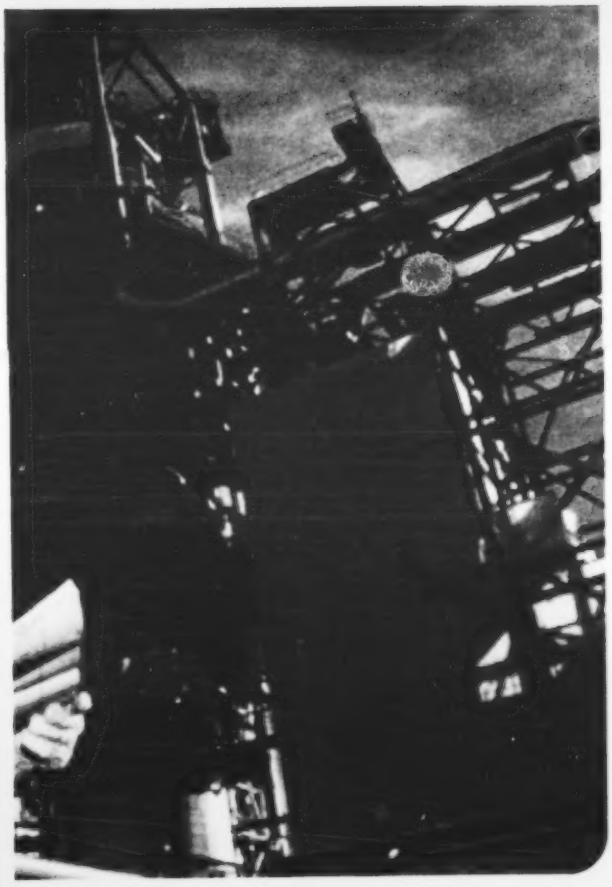


Image courtesy Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Set Common Standards

Gary Wagar, executive director of the Alberta Construction Safety Association, is equally enthusiastic about the standardized safety training. It's a "win-win" for all stakeholders, he says, with "no downside."

Although the face-to-face meetings began last fall, the idea of establishing common safety training standards has been around for some time. Contractors had been pushing the oil sands companies to create across-the-board standards similar to those successfully employed in the pulp mill industry.

Three years ago, industry and contractor representatives began discussing the creation of a regional safety training centre. They investigated a program Lambton College offered the oil industry in Sarnia, but concluded that a similar program wouldn't work for Fort McMurray's larger and more transient labour force. It became clear they needed a made-in-Alberta solution.

Finding that solution became Rick Everett's responsibility. Everett, who worked in Syncrude's Human and Organization Development department, was seconded to the project for four months.

Everett was challenged to develop:

- safety standards agreeable to all three plants
- an accreditation standard and recertification timeline
- a checklist that allows field leaders to test what is happening in the field to the standard
- a training and certification tracking system

Everett's original contract was later extended, and last January, the three companies signed an agreement creating and funding the non-profit Wood Buffalo Safety Association to develop safety training standards. Everett's first step was to create an advisory committee that included representatives of the three companies plus Alberta Workplace Health & Safety, Keyano College, the Alberta Construction Safety Association and the Alberta Building Trades Council. Then came a working group with representatives from the Association, trade unions and contractors. Finally, project teams were assigned to develop individual training standards.

The project came together quickly. "We got all 17 people on the advisory committee into a room in September last year, and by December 18 all project teams were 80 to 100 per cent complete," Everett says.

The minimum for all of the Association's standards will be Workplace Health & Safety requirements, says Everett, "but the final, agreed-upon standards may be higher." Standards will also be a good fit with WHS's recently announced Work Safe Alberta initiative.

One of the keys to the Association's success, says Everett, is that all three companies are equal partners. Tim Gondek, environmental health and safety integration facilitator for Suncor, says everyone has made concessions. "The goal here isn't to force training standards into existing concepts developed by one or other of the companies. It's to find the best training standards that we can all agree to."

The Association has already identified over 50 programs that require common standards, so the project will be ongoing for at least a couple of years. As each standard is completed, it will be posted on the Association's Web site. After that, Everett hopes there will be buy-in from other companies in the region.

Since everything is working so smoothly, one question remains: Why wasn't this done years ago? Wagar offers a one-word answer: competition. "Something similar was tried in Fort Saskatchewan a dozen years ago but we couldn't get the owners to get together and agree."

Syncrude's Dunfield argues that competitiveness is no longer a factor. "Safety isn't a competitive thing. We're not giving away proprietary knowledge. We're working together to develop common safety and training standards that will benefit everybody."

Suncor's Gondek agrees. "Safety is the one issue that breaks down all barriers," he says.

Getting the three major players talking has resulted in some unanticipated agreements in other areas. For example, at one time Albian and Syncrude used amber vehicle lights, while Suncor preferred blue. Suncor recently switched to amber to provide consistency. "We see other opportunities to look at similar cross-company safety practices," says Gondek, "such as the permitting system."

Stakeholders are unanimous in their hope that the standards will eventually be accepted, not only at other oil sands projects, but also in other industries province-wide. Everett has already had calls from other organizations wanting to become accredited to the Association's standards. He says optimistically, "I think the opportunities are limitless."

Norma Ramage is a freelance writer and communications consultant living in Calgary.

Resources

WEB LINKS

http://www.syncrude.com/
Syncrude home page

http://www.suncor.com/bins/index.asp
Suncor home page

http://www.albiansands.com/albiansands/homepage.htm
Albian Sands home page

http://www.keyano.ca/mine/index.htm
Keyano College Mine Operations program

Workplace Health & Safety (WHS)

Contact WHS any time

For occupational health and safety information and assistance, or to order Workplace Health & Safety publications, phone the Call Centre at 1-866-415-8690 or go to **www.whs.gov.ab.ca**.

Sign up for WHS news

To be notified by e-mail of all new WHS Web site postings, sign up for a FREE subscription service through **www.whs.gov.ab.ca**.

OHS materials in the Alberta Government Library – Labour Building

The library houses a large selection of occupational health and safety information materials. Visit the Web site at **www.gov.ab.ca/hre/library**. Access the library catalogue at **draweb.library.ualberta.ca**.

To borrow materials, please contact your local library and make your requests through the inter-library loan process, or visit the library at:

3rd floor, 10808-99 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 0G5

Phone: (780) 427-8533 or toll-free, 310-0000

Fax: (780) 422-0084

WHS is a program of Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

Good Product Design

Avoiding the Average

by Ray Cislo

Have you ever wondered why you can't reach the controls on that piece of equipment? Or the top tier of shelving? Do you find it a tight squeeze to get through the man opening, or always bump your head on certain doorways?

These are examples of how designers often make the big mistake of designing for the average person. The problem is, very few people are average. A good design takes into account that people vary widely in size and shape. Controls and shelves should be reachable by the shortest person. Man openings should be designed for the widest person (including clothing and equipment) and doorways for the tallest person.

The 90 per cent solution

Since it's not usually practical to design products that fit all workers, good designers disregard extremes of body size, that is, the smallest and largest 5 per cent. Many designs manage to meet the needs of 90 per cent of people by allowing the equipment or product to be adjusted. For example, seating and work surfaces may adjust up, down or sideways, or be designed to tilt.

It is therefore vital that designers know something about the "group" that will be using the product. Body size varies depending on ethnic background, gender and age. Females are smaller than males in most dimensions, and as age increases, many adults become shorter but heavier.

Body dimension information, called anthropometric data, is available in many ergonomic textbooks. The data typically provided includes various heights (overall, shoulder, elbow, hip, knee, sitting); breadths (head, shoulder, hip, hand, foot); lengths (shoulder-elbow, elbow-fingertip, hand, foot) and grip reaches of the hand.

Clearance and reach

A workspace must provide enough headroom, legroom, elbow room, etc. to allow a person to work safely. Handles and openings for hands must be large enough to allow for large hands to get in and out easily. Designing clearances for the largest person – at the top end of the 90 per cent range – means that there will always be enough clearance for smaller persons as well.

The location of controls or the height of shelving depends on the distance a person can reach. Designing reach distances for the smallest person – at the bottom end of the 90 per cent range – means that controls or shelving are always within the reach of larger persons.

So why do designers get it wrong?

Failing to consider the size and shape of the persons using the product is the main reason. The thinking goes that if the product suits the designer (based on his or her size and shape), it must be good enough for everyone else. Wrong.

The second line of thinking is that if the product is good enough for the average person, it must be good enough for everyone else. Wrong again. Designers should be using readily available body size information and avoiding the average.

And finally, there's an assumption that everyone's needs can't be met and that good design is too expensive. Also wrong. Meeting the needs of 90 per cent of the population is not that difficult. A good design will pay for itself by keeping users happy and safe.

Ray Cislo, P.Eng., B.Sc.(H.K.), is a safety engineering specialist at Workplace Policy and Standards.

Resources

WEB LINKS

www.ergonomics4schools.com/lzone/workspace.htm
"Workspace," part of the Learning Zone's Ergonomics 4 Schools

IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY – LABOUR BUILDING

Books

Fitting the Task to the Human: A Textbook of Occupational Ergonomics
by K.H.E. Kroemer and E. Grandjean, Taylor & Francis, 5th edition
(QP 309 G72 1997)

Bodyspace: Anthropometry, Ergonomics and the Design of Work
by S. Pheasant, Taylor & Francis, 2nd edition (TA 166 P49 1996)

Partnerships in HEALTH and SAFETY

What is Partnerships?

Partnerships in Health and Safety is a province-wide injury prevention program sponsored cooperatively by government, labour and industry.

The Partnerships program offers:

- tools to implement a health and safety management system
- guidance in applying for a Certificate of Recognition (COR)
- the potential for premium refunds from the Workers' Compensation Board–Alberta.

For more information about the Partnerships program, call (780) 427-8842 or toll free 310-0000.

F&D Brings Safety to the Set

First COR in entertainment industry

by Juliet Kershaw

Although the scenes in the Jackie Chan movie, *Shanghai Noon*, are straight out of Texas, they were filmed in Calgary, Indus, Brooks and Stavely. The old west sets were constructed by Calgary-based F&D Scene Changes Ltd., an internationally recognized, award-winning company that has also built movie sets for *K-19* and *Spiderman*, pavilions for Disney and the Calgary Zoo, and stages for Cirque du Soleil.

A 20-year veteran of the set design business, F&D received its Certificate of Recognition in health and safety from Alberta Human Resources and Employment in December 2002 – a first in the province's entertainment industry.

Though F&D's client and project lists sound glamorous, the company's work is mostly about construction. You'll find the same tradespeople and equipment at the scene shop as you would at industrial construction sites.

Therefore, safety is an integral part of all stages of all projects. If you visit F&D's downtown Calgary facility, you'll have to wear a hard hat and eye protection while exploring the 68,000 square feet of floor space under its 32-foot high ceilings. The equipment used to bring to life intricately engineered designs such as a Noah's Ark, a Spanish mission or a Santa's castle even includes nine cranes.

Carpenters, welders, electricians, heavy-equipment operators and painters are the mainstay of F&D's set-building crews. They are members of IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) and they have expertise in such things as scenic fabrication, props construction, sculptural carving and scenic painting. The number of tradespeople on site can reach 150, supplementing F&D's core group of 40 full-time employees of department heads and coordinators.

In the past few years, F&D Scene Changes has worked hard to change the safety culture at its shop. Listening to

Left and facing page: Santa Fe style mission building created for the movie *Shanghai Noon*. Above: Constructed ruin made for *Texas Rangers*.
All images courtesy of F&D.

and addressing workers' concerns has helped. "One of the toughest things to do is to get an artist to wear a harness, because it inhibits their freedom of movement," says F&D's safety coordinator Denis Dankewich. F&D resolved this dilemma by acquiring articulated booms and scissor lifts so that crews working at heights can more easily access and view their work. The equipment allows them to get close to the work by positioning the vehicle and walking freely on its platform while wearing a fall-arresting harness.

Another "particular concern" at the shop is maintaining air quality, says Dankewich. For instance, construction of the surface of an assembled fibreglass mountain for a theme park in Asia required special "air handling" for the workers. Outside air was pumped to the masks of spray-foamers and fibreglassers, and respirators equipped with organic vapour cartridges were supplied to the scenic painters.

F&D has responded proactively to its health and safety challenges. While the Certificate of Recognition reduces F&D's Workers' Compensation Board premiums, Dankewich says that developing a good safety record is more a matter of company pride. Management provided the impetus for the focus on safety, hiring Dankewich as safety coordinator five years ago. Dankewich initially sought assistance from the Alberta Safety Council, and it was the ASC that brought his attention to the government's Partnerships program and the COR. Dankewich then arranged for an external safety audit and used the audit information to pursue the company's health and safety goals. The company made its final push to meet the COR requirements with help from the Alberta Construction Safety Association, a Partnerships Certifying Partner.

How have things changed as safety awareness and acceptance increased at F&D? "It's taken years to get people on side," Dankewich says, but now he notices the difference in their workers. At F&D, for instance, theatrical painters wear respirators when necessary, while, Dankewich says, few do "in the field." Similarly, F&D's tradespeople no longer resist using the fall arresters the company provides.

Iain Campbell, partnerships consultant with the Alberta government's Workplace Partnerships office, says F&D's achievement is a real success story. "Lots of times it takes a lot longer to get results," Campbell says.

"It would be great if F&D could encourage others in their industry to follow suit," Campbell adds. That may happen, as Dankewich is now the safety coordinator for IATSE and is planning to challenge other scene shops to give health and safety the priority it deserves.

Juliet Kershaw is an Edmonton-based writer and editor.

Real World Solutions

Real World Solutions is a regular column that suggests simple, inexpensive ways to improve employee safety and health through adjustments to the workplace.

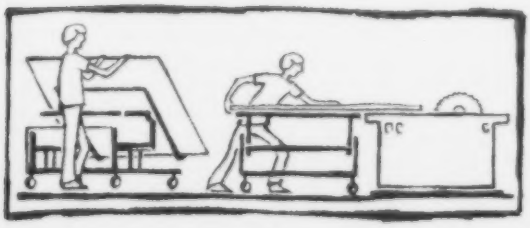
What improvements have you made at your workplace? If you've found a solution worth sharing, please send it to ray.cislo@gov.ab.ca.

Lifting Hook and Panel Trolley

The Problem
The large size and weight of wood-based panel products means they are difficult to handle and position.

Two Solutions

A lifting hook allows one person to move smaller panels with a good grip and without bending too much. A steel rod 60 to 80 cm long with a hook on one end and a handle on the other is all that is really needed.



Panel trolleys feature locking casters and a tilting bed, and they are height adjustable. One worker can load and handle a large number of panels. Once loaded with panels and moved to a machine, the top panel can be adjusted to the height of the machine table and machined.

Benefits
Reducing or eliminating the manual handling of materials reduces the likelihood of workers getting injured. Worker productivity improves and fewer panels will get damaged.

Web Watcher

by Bob Christie

Is profit a four-letter word? Of course not. Most of what makes Alberta run is found in the for-profit companies. The oil industry works on a profit motive, as does the forest industry, agriculture, construction and every other industry in the province. Even the heretofore sacred cows of education and health care are seeing more and more private sector, for-profit entities taking over larger and larger pieces of the sector.

However, it is always worthwhile to look at Web sites from the private sector with a jaundiced eye. Some sites are advertising, plain and simple. They are not unlike the bulk mail flyers that clutter your mailbox. Once in a long while these flyers are valuable because they tell you about something you are looking to buy. Most of the time, though, they simply add to the weight of the recycle pile.

Most canny corporations are beginning to recognize that they need to build some kind of carrot into their sites to get you there in the first place. The parallel between well designed Web sites and "free" television is too striking to miss. When you sit down to watch your favorite hockey team on television, you get no bill – unless you are prepared to pay a cable company. Many think the three-hour time slot on TV is about hockey, but of course it is more about advertising, which pays for the broadcast. In return for getting that "free" hockey game, you are expected to watch as the advertisers pummel you with some of the most carefully crafted and scientifically designed groups of 30-second messages ever designed. Were the entire three hours made up of ads for a furniture store, a video rental shop, a new car or a take-out pizza shop, you wouldn't watch long. But because you have only a couple of minutes of ads before you get to go back to the hockey game, you put up with it.

Spend a little time with any for-profit Web site and ask this question: "Is there anything here that will cause me to keep coming back?" If not, do not put it in your list of favourites. If yes, then file it and go back again. We now have hundreds of millions of sites, and over 4.2 million that include both of the words "health" and "safety." So you need not select anything that is less than ideal for your purposes.

On the other side of the equation, if you are going to build, rebuild or modify your organization's Web site, remember that the viewers you are trying to attract need to make a conscious decision to come to your site or to put you in their favourites listing. What are you going to offer that will keep that potential customer coming back? What is the freebie? More and more, this is what is taking the design of Web sites out of the technical arena and into the communication, design field.

The next couple of issues of this magazine will move into national Web sites from for-profit organizations. Look at them not only as a source of valuable content, but also as a source of ideas for your own Web site. The Web is an increasingly crowded and sophisticated method of promotion.

Bob Christie is a partner at Christie Communications Ltd., a multimedia development company in Edmonton. Bob supplies most of the Web link resources for the articles in this magazine.

Occupational Health & Safety Magazine publishes Workplace Fatalities to remind readers of the importance of workplace health and safety.

The information is not a final investigation report. In many cases investigations are continuing. Final investigation reports are filed at the Alberta Government Library – Labour Building site and can be reviewed there or on the Workplace Health & Safety Web site at **www.whs.gov.ab.ca** under Fatalities.

An occupational fatality refers to the death of a worker caused by a work-related incident or exposure.

To protect personal privacy, the fatality descriptions do not include the names of the deceased.

Work-related incident fatalities October 2002 - January 2003

Most work-related incident fatalities that fall under provincial jurisdiction are investigated by Workplace Health & Safety. In general, highway traffic, farm, disease or heart attack fatalities are not investigated.

The following fatalities have been or are being investigated.

A **44-year-old construction worker** was using a scissor lift with another worker to access the roof of a three-storey apartment building. The scissor lift entered within the safe limits of approach of a 25,000 volt overhead power line. As the worker climbed off the roof into the scissor lift to descend to the ground, he made contact with the power line and was electrocuted.

A **44-year-old mechanic** working on a condominium construction site was trying to locate an electrical outlet. The worker pulled 12 sheets of drywall stored in a corridor toward himself and was overpowered by their weight.

A **35-year-old janitor** was operating a forklift in the back yard of a shop when the front left wheel went over the 23-cm-high concrete base of a metal pillar. The forklift rolled over and pinned the worker between the ground and the rollover protection bar of the forklift. The worker died of injuries sustained. The worker was not wearing the seatbelt and was not a trained forklift operator.

A **34-year-old casual labourer** working on a commercial construction site fell 5.7 m to the ground while installing and bolting together galvanized perlins on the metal skeleton of the building structure. The worker, who had been doing this type of work for approximately two months, was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

A **44-year-old flagman** was struck by a motor vehicle on a public road while performing flagman duties.

A **43-year-old truck driver** was run over by a log truck trailer in a log yard at a lumber mill while removing straps from a load of logs on his truck. The driver of another truck with an empty trailer had stopped to talk to him and then proceeded to leave the site. The worker who was removing the straps either stepped back into the path of the trailer or was knocked down by one of the uprights on the trailer, and he was run over.

A **61-year-old truck driver** was discovered underneath the cab of his truck on a lease road.

A **27-year-old apprentice heavy duty mechanic** was crushed by a bus that started to roll while he was underneath it. The worker was attaching an external air supply to the bus air system. This incident occurred outside a transit system's bus barns.

A **46-year-old motorman** was on the floor of a drilling rig preparing to remove drill pipe from a hole. At the same time, overhead lifting equipment used to remove the drill pipe was being lowered to the floor. Its hook assembly struck the motorman on the side of the head, and he died of his injuries.

A **44-year-old rig motorman** was working with a rig crew in a rig cellar to install a stack onto a well. The stack broke free from the well casing and fell, and the worker was crushed between a blowout preventer and the side of the rig.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Alberta Health & Safety Conference and Trade Fair

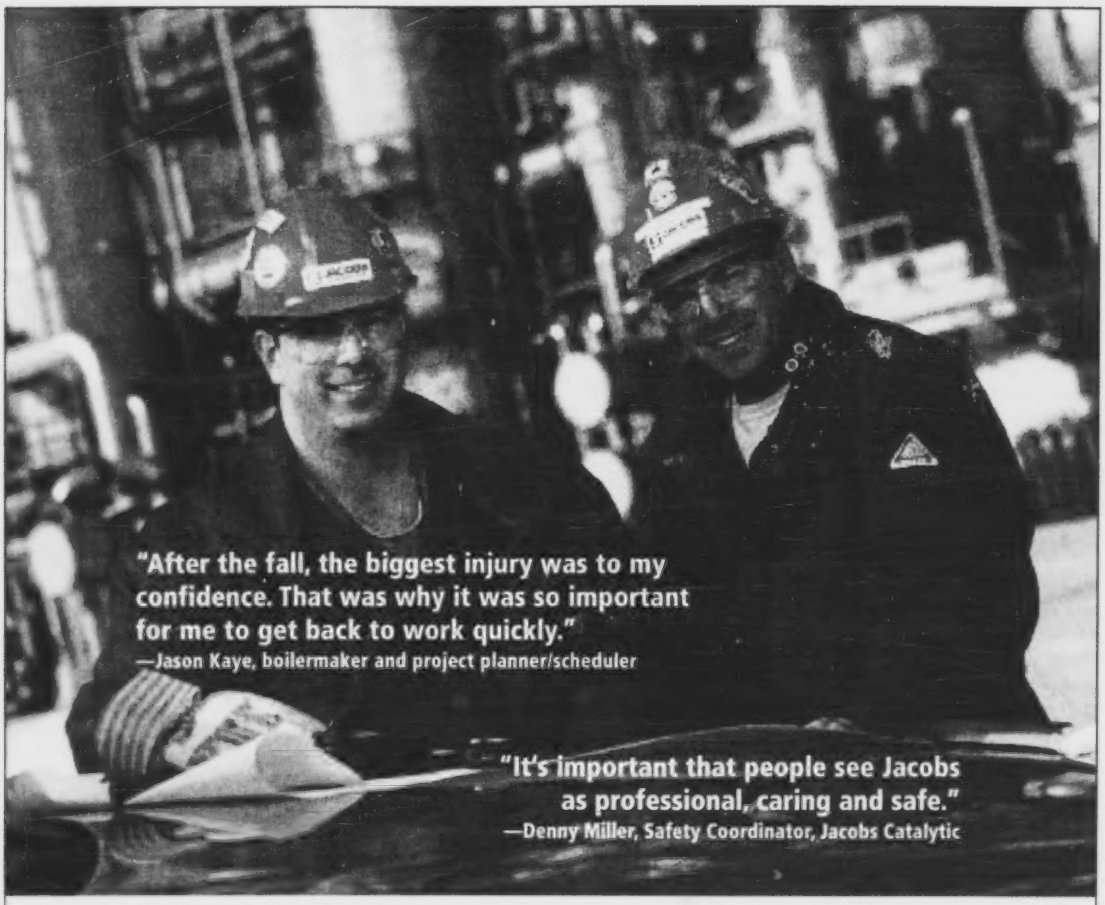
Hosted by the Health & Safety Conference Society of Alberta

November 24 to 27, 2003

Telus Convention Centre, Calgary

This second annual conference, which is expected to attract in excess of 750 attendees, will feature more than 40 educational presentations and approximately 100 trade fair exhibits.

For information contact Ed Corson at (403) 275-0538, **edcorson@telus.net** *or Dianne Paulson at 1-800-661-2272,* **dpaulson@acsa-safety.org**.


"After the fall, the biggest injury was to my confidence. That was why it was so important for me to get back to work quickly."
—Jason Kaye, boilermaker and project planner/scheduler
"It's important that people see Jacobs as professional, caring and safe."
—Denny Miller, Safety Coordinator, Jacobs Catalytic

How did he fall 20 feet and come up smiling?

THEY TURNED A POTENTIAL TRAGEDY INTO AN OPPORTUNITY. Jason Kaye and Denny Miller work at Jacobs Catalytic. When Jason slipped and plunged almost 20 feet, he narrowly missed impaling himself on an exposed rod protruding from a valve, and nearly died. Denny and his health and safety team helped him get back on his feet. Jason was back on site doing modified work right away. The end result? The boilermaker re-invented himself and today he is a valued planner/scheduler for Jacobs, responsible for multi-million-dollar projects. Jason is grateful for the opportunity to change his career following an injury that could have spelled disaster. "When people ask me how I got into planning, I tell them I fell into it!"

Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta

Working for a safe, healthy, strong Alberta

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Alberta
HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT

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